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ABSTRACT

Self-study, a process by which members of an academic program evaluate the components of that program, involves the gathering of data, discussion, and the presentation of a written report. Fairleigh Dickinson University (New Jersey) undertook such a program in 1980 to be completed by March 1982. Faculty members of the communications, speech, and theatre department had to complete a rationale for each course addressing questions of client, content, enrollment, scheduling, credits, requirements, objectives, organization, costs, and so on by March 1981. A library report covering periodicals in the discipline was also requested. The department sought candidates for the position of academic consultant, as recommended by the school senate's guidelines. Because of the diversity of the department, two consultants were chosen, one for communication and one for speech and theatre. The consultants visited the department and delivered both oral and written reports. When completed, the 250-page self-study report covered a wide variety of department activities, programs, and materials. Student input was also reflected in the consultants' report. With cycle 1 of the self-study completed for all sections of the department, cycle 2, the response to the process of the cycle 1, was undertaken. (JL)

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The Anatomy of a Self Study

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Presented by
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Self study is a process by which members of an academic program evaluate the components of that program. It involves the gathering of data, discussion, and the presentation of a written report.

In order to meet the challenge of the coming years in higher education, the Fairleigh Dickinson University Senate, (a tri-campus body) through the Academic Standards Committee, developed guidelines for the self evaluation of all programs in the university. These were proposed and passed in May 1980. In December 1980 the LAEPC [Liberal Arts (college) Educational Policies Committee] established a schedule for its own college which was made up of 13 departments and 3 programs. The minutes of this meeting were sent to all chairpersons and program coordinators. The LAEPC recommended the following schedule;

February 1, 1982 - all departments to initiate a self study.

April 1, 1981 - each department to submit to LAEPC a draft outline of its self study and the names and the vitae of the consultants who indicated their availability.

April 30, 1981 - The Dean, LAEPC, and departments to make a final decision on the selection of a consultant for each department.

May 15, 1982 - department to notify the consultant of his appointment. The LAEPC will review drafts of each

department's self study at this time.

September 21, 1981 - final date for the on site visit of consultants.

December 1, 1981 - final drafts of self study to be sent to LAEPC and the Dean.

February 1, 1982 - LAEPC to complete its review of departmental self study reports.

March 15, 1982 - completed self studies to be sent to office of Academic Vice President.

The Senate Resolution clearly and frequently requested that the activity surrounding the self study be viewed by all participants i.e.; departments, administration and consultants, as one of collegiality as opposed to investigation. The attitude was to be one of working together for academic excellence.

Simultaneously each department was formulating a schedule to fit the time frame set by the Senate and the LAEPC. Both formal and informal discussions were held. The Chairman of the Communications, Speech and Theatre Department requested the following data be submitted to him by Feb. 1, 1981.

1. updated vita from all department faculty
2. updated syllabi for all courses from faculty
3. report on specific areas or programs i.e.;

- a. Internship program drafted by the department
Coordinator of Internship program
- b. Media Center drafted by the Director of the Media
Center
- c. Radio Station drafted by the Director of the station

March 15, 1981, was the deadline for the rationale for each course taught in the department to be submitted to the Chairman. In preparation for writing the rationale, the following were questions to be asked for each course. It was understood that not all questions were appropriate for every course. Each faculty member was asked to write a rationale for each of the courses he taught based on these questions. If two faculty (as in the case of Speech) taught the same course they were asked to collaborate on the rationale.

- 1. What groups of students does the course serve?
- 2. Does the course content overlap with other courses
taught in the department or college?
- 3. How often is the course offered?
- 4. Has enrollment increased or decreased?
- 5. Are there written documents revealing the evolvement
of this course?
- 6. How many credits offered for the course?
- 7. What department, college or state requirements does

the course fulfill?

8. At what level is the course taught?
9. Is the course cross-listed? If so, with what department and why?
10. Are there prerequisites? If so, what are they and what purpose do the prerequisites serve?
11. Are the objectives of the course, as listed in the syllabi, viable at this point in time?
12. Does the course content permit the realization of the course objective?
13. What instructional materials are utilized? Can they be improved?
14. Do the assignments aid in fulfilling the course objectives?
15. Are the required facilities and equipment available for the course?
16. Is there an additional fee for the course? Is it appropriate?
17. How is the course organized i.e.; are there lectures, labs, field trips?
18. In what ways has the course been beneficial to students?
19. What are the costs related to offering this course?
(staff, rental of films, use of facilities)

Also at this time the Chairman requested a list from the library of all titles of periodicals related to each of the disciplines in the department (speech, theatre, journalism, the media and advertising and public relations.) The final library report contained the number of books in each area, an analysis of circulation figures of books by subject for the year 1980-1981, and an analysis of reference questions answered by subject area for 1980-1981. In addition he asked each member of the department to assess and report to the Department on the quality of the holdings in the library in each member's area of specialization.

The Senate guidelines recommended that each department select two candidates for the academic consultant. The names of the consultants were to be sent to the Dean of the College listed in order of the department's preference with the resumes and other pertinent documentation of their qualifications to review the program. The guidelines further stated that the consultant should be a recognized authority in his field with no "personal or professional bias" related to our university or the particular department. The consultant was also to have appropriate teaching and consulting experience. The guidelines also suggested selecting a person familiar with the career potential of the discipline. If the Dean concurred with the

Department's selection, the Department Chairman then notified the prospective candidate of his selection.

The Dean had the opportunity to reject the recommendation of the department. If the Dean rejected the department's recommendation, he was required to give a reason for the rejection. He then could request another recommendation from the department for a consultant.

The Department began its search for a consultant by asking each member to suggest qualified persons. In addition to those specifications already mentioned in the Senate guidelines, the Department sought someone who had experience in a multi-disciplinary department similar to our own, someone who was not affiliated personally or professionally with a member of our faculty, and someone who would be willing to accept the travel and stipend arrangements stipulated by the university. A member of the department, acting independently, contacted SCA (Speech Communication Association) and ATA (American Theatre Association) for the names of possible candidates. After all the names of the candidates had been submitted to the Chairman, he wrote to about eight possible candidates. Some responded; some did not.

The department members felt that the disciplines taught in the department were so diverse that it would be

inappropriate to ask one person to cover all of them. Therefore, after lengthy deliberation it was decided to have two consultants. One would consider primarily the communication area (media theory, journalism, public relations, film, TV and radio) and the other would consider speech and theatre.

Approximately a month before the on site visit, each consultant was sent a packet of materials. This consisted of the University Catalogue, the Self Study Report (see contents of Self Study Report), and a map of the campus.

The Communication consultant was on campus for two days; the Speech and Theatre consultant visited for one long day. During their visit each consultant met privately with the Dean, the Provost, the Dean of Students, the Director of the Internship Program in the College of Business Administration, and the Director of the campus Learning Center. The Speech and Theatre consultant toured the facilities and met with the personnel of the campus Television Station, the Library, the Audio Visual Department, both the AM and FM Stations, the Theatre and the Fine Arts Department. Each consultant had the opportunity to meet and talk with students. This occurred formally in classroom visits and, for the Speech and Theatre consultant, informally backstage during a Student Experimental Theatre

rehearsal. In addition, each full time, and some part time, faculty members met with each consultant privately as well as in a group. During the private visits the faculty were encouraged to be honest and open in their attitudes and opinions.

At the end of the on site visit, as required by the Senate resolution on self evaluation, the consultants delivered an oral preliminary report to the Department in the presence of the Dean. At this meeting, the faculty and the Dean were given the opportunity to ask questions, and to clarify impressions, thereby supplementing the written report.

The consultants were then required to submit a written report within fifteen days to the department, with copies sent to the Dean, the Provost, the Liberal Arts Educational Policies Committee and the Academic Vice President.

When completed the Self Study Report was approximately 250 pages and contained the following;

- Statement of the mission of the University
- Statement of the mission of the Department
- Chart of the organization of the University
- Description of the curriculum
- Statement on student advisement

Library report (see above)

Comments on the interaction of the department and the
community

Comments on issues and proposals related to the growth
of the department

Projected schedule of courses 1982-1983

Sample check sheets showing course requirements for
the different majors within the Department

Planning Report: Three Year Liberal Arts Projection
1980-1981 enrollment figures for all courses in the
department

List of department and student sponsored theatre
productions with attendance figures 1973-1981
(the department began in 1973)

Theatre budget 1973-1981

Floor plan of existing theatre

Architect's report on projected conversion of old gym
to a theatre

Media Center Report

Audio Visual Aids Report

Floor plans of department offices

Journalism Workshop Report (including report on student
newspaper)

University analysis of average student credit load
1975-1980

University average class size 1975-1980

Rationale for each course taught in the Department

University full time equivalent enrollment 1975-1981

Report on AM and FM radio stations

Material on Communications Science course

Material on Advertising Design as a secondary major

Statement on prospects for a Graduate Program

Vitae of all faculty in department

Comments on current problems related to the curriculum

as reflected in department minutes (which were
included)

In addition, a scale model of the proposed theatre was
on display in the department.

By the time Cycle I of the Self Study had been
completed all members of all departments, all special
program personnel, the members of the Library staff, and
many members of the Administrative offices were aware of the
Self Study Project. Not only were they aware, but most had
had direct input into the Self Study Reports.

Some of the students knew that a self evaluation was in
progress. In the Department of Communication, Speech and
Theatre, the students spoke with the consultant backstage
about the Theatre program. Other students had the
opportunity to confer with the consultants during the

classroom visitation. Their comments were reflected in the consultant's reports.

Cycle II of the Self Study is in progress now. It is the response to the process described in this report. This response is both the action taken on the evaluator's recommendations and a report written by the Department.